

COUNTY REPORT

# Budget Debate Puts the Spotlight on Problems

By BURTON W. CHACE

County Supervisor

Every year at this time when budgets and plans for the next fiscal year are being weighed, the problems confronting Los Angeles County come into sharp focus.

Los Angeles County, with a population exceeding seven million, is the largest in the nation, and with this unprecedented growth come many problems.

Each supervisor tries to meet the challenge of growth by being informed and effective, not only in our districts but countywide. Each supervisor, naturally, has his own priority list of countywide problems, and here is mine: welfare, its legislation, administration, and rising costs; tax relief; smog; job training and employment; and transportation.

ALTHOUGH there are many more, these are the ones of major urgency.

State mandated welfare costs and the property tax burden go hand-in-hand, since welfare is one of the major reasons for the heavy load carried by the property owner.

Out of the preliminary \$1.38 billion county budget under study for 1968-69, \$511,700,000 is earmarked for welfare—an increase of \$70 million. The county is told to provide welfare services, as well as courts, sheriffs, hospitals, etc., but it is not given the authority to develop new sources of revenue.

By state law, most of the county budget is financed by property tax.

I certainly support the principle that the county should take care of its handicapped, its poor, its aged, its blind, and its other unfortunate citizens, but I object to the manner in which the state and federal governments control the programs.

THE STATE has indicated this county must pay \$511,700,000 for welfare next year. It doesn't say how to pay it, however.

Consequently, supervisors are supporting a proposed State Constitution amendment which would limit property tax to one per cent of the market value. This means welfare would have to revert to the state level where it belongs if the state is going to mandate the terms.

A staggering blow was dealt to this country when the Supreme Court challenged our one-year residency requirement. This means that welfare recipients will migrate here at a faster rate, since they would not have to wait a year before they qualify for aid as in the past.

This county pays an average family of four \$183 a month under its welfare program. The same family is paid \$33.60 a month in Mississippi, \$60 a month in Florida, and \$62 in Alabama, to name a few states.

WITH the threatened removal of the residency requirement, the county has no protection against a massive influx of welfare cases. I believe the only fair solution is for the federal government to set a uniform welfare subsidy and to administer it.

Because welfare is so costly, some way must be found to take the load off real property. Supervisors are seeking a half cent sales tax from the Legislature to help with some significant property tax relief.

This would not mean a sales tax increase, since a half-cent is scheduled to be removed July 1. I feel this would be a fair tax and a real help to the county.

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Along the same line, I don't support the preliminary budget of \$1.38 billion, and I predict several million dollars will be cut before the measure is finalized.

Smog control is imperative if the county is to continue to thrive and live in good health.

We have whipped pollution problems caused by stationary sources, such as incinerators and industry, and 90 per cent of the present smog problem is caused by cars.

IF DETROIT auto makers would include all the scientific advancements at their disposal, smog could be eliminated in 10 years.

This county has controlled emissions from fixed sources, set up more than 100 rules governing emissions into the

atmosphere, and prosecuted 40,000 people for violating these rules. The county has a conviction rate of 98 per cent.

We have removed the menace of the backyard incinerator, which is the primary source of smog in New York and Chicago. So while the smog problem still is with us, it is being combatted vigorously. Victory is just around the corner, and the sooner the

pressure gets to Detroit auto makers, the sooner smog will be eliminated.

Another major problem is the lack of jobs and the need for effective job training programs. I believe this is the key to better race relations, to easing racial tensions, to curbing crime, and to having a healthy economy.

women are not educationally or vocationally qualified to hold a job, and if they have a makeshift job, it is not financially or personally satisfying.

Consequently, there is restlessness, frustration, and perhaps a "release" in some act of crime.

Industry, individuals, government, and educators must form a task force to train

these people so they can have a chance to attain their maximum potential.

Most importantly, there must be greater financial compensation in a job than there is in a welfare allotment. This is a simple, obvious fact—but one often overlooked by welfare "experts."

The county must also have a transportation system which will quickly and inexpensively

take its millions of people to destinations daily. While I look favorably on several proposals dealing with this problem—including state bonds—I oppose any attempts to saddle the cost of such a system on the property tax base.

An effective rapid transit system would eliminate the need for so many autos, and with this would go traffic congestion with its high rate of injury, death, and smog.

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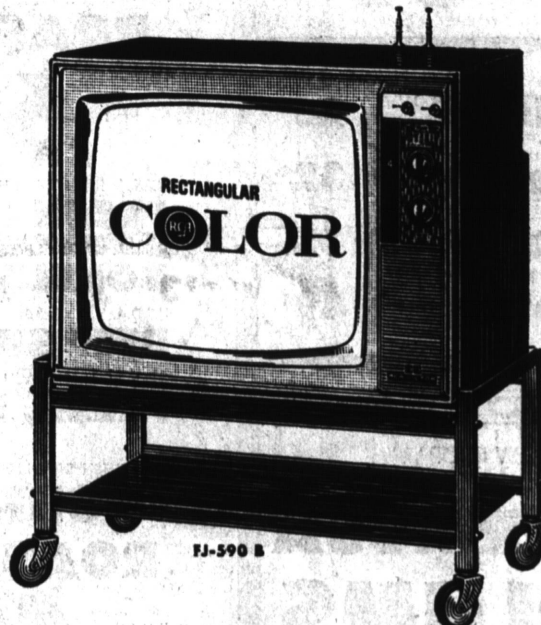


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